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REV. S. BARBARA

THIS ISSUE: BIRTH

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## EDITORIAL



ON first thought an issue on birth would seem to have a limited appeal—and that despite the fact that the vast majority of people are either married (and therefore usually parents) or looking to marriage as their future vocation (and as a consequence expecting—that is, if they have normal desires—that they will eventually be parents). On second thought however it is evident that the subject of birth should be of interest to everyone—and not only because everyone has been through it! The birth of a new member of the human race is not only the concern of his parents and rejoicing—or lamenting—relatives, but also of every member of the human community. This is especially so for the Christian who sees in the new-born baby an actual or potential member of the Mystical Body of Christ, a person whose mission on earth is intimately tied up with his own, and with whom he hopes to share eternity. It is strange that people who are called to live in eternity together can be utterly indifferent to one another on earth.

This attitude of indifference to the birth of a child—of regarding it as exclusively the parents' business—of an indifference that verges on hostility, is especially prevalent in America. One wonders if the fact that the United States is one of the few countries without a family allowance system can be attributed at all to praiseworthy independence of the state, and not almost completely to the attitude that having a family is a couple's own fault, and own concern and no one else's. This is rugged individualism carried to an absurd extreme. No wonder that papal pleas for a *family* living wage sound alien to our ears! Or that any consideration given to the family by the community always seems a matter of charity and not—as it really is—of justice.

While in this issue we confine ourselves almost completely to birth itself and its immediately related aspects, we are aware that Christians have the responsibility of working for those social conditions that will facilitate birth into a normal family environment. Such conditions would include, besides the family wage already mentioned, adequate housing, a community geared to family life, less costly maternity care, and a psychological and spiritual atmosphere where bearing babies is socially acceptable.

THE EDITOR



# Marriage and Rhythm

**Frederick E. Klueg, O.P.:** Is Rhythm licit? Great impulse was given recently to a quest for an answer to this question by the two addresses the Holy Father has given on this subject in which he both condemned and approved the use of Rhythm. Rhythm, then, is neither the monster of darkness some would make it, nor the angel of light. Somewhere between the extremes of all good and all evil is to be found the answer to the question.

Father Merkelbach, back in 1934, said that periodic continence, or Rhythm, is in itself indifferent, *at male sonans*, that is, "evil sounding." Considered in itself and independently of the circumstances or end of the one using the practice, it is indifferent, neither good nor evil, but it has about it something which inclines it more toward evil than toward good. Let us consider this conclusion in its different parts.

## **Rhythm is in itself indifferent**

Periodic continence is certainly not in the classification of acts which are intrinsically good. Periodic continence is nothing more than the practice of marriage without one of the marriage goods, the good of offspring. The marital act itself considered independently of the practice of Rhythm is not intrinsically good but indifferent. If that is true, how then can the practice of periodic continence be intrinsically good, denying, as it does, one of the justifying causes of the marriage act?

Periodic continence just as certainly does not fit into the classification of acts which are intrinsically evil. An act which is intrinsically evil can never be justified, never permitted. Telling a lie is always a lie, and sinful; the unjust taking of the life of another is always murder, and sinful; the use of instruments or withdrawal in the marital act for the purpose of preventing conception is intrinsically evil and sinful, no matter how great the justifying cause might be. We may never counsel sin, but the Church permits confessors to counsel periodic continence under certain conditions. Pope Pius XII in his recent address to Midwives in Rome said: "Observing the non-fertile periods alone can be morally *lawful*."

**S***SOME* years ago *INTEGRITY* published a widely-read article called *Rhythm the Unhappy Compromise*. Since then our Holy Father has made two important pronouncements on the subject. It is in the light of these that Father Klueg, who did his thesis for his doctorate at the Angelicum on *Rhythm*, writes his article.

Rhythm, indifferent though it be, has something about it which inclines it to the side of evil more than to that of good, namely, the positive exclusion by the will of one of the marriage goods, the good of offspring. This exclusion does not make of the practice something intrinsically evil, for the marriage act thus practiced has the good of fidelity or faith (whereby one man is faithful to one woman, his wife, having relations with no other, and mutually aiding each other) to justify it, but the reason for the exclusion of this good makes the practice morally evil or good.

### **Rhythm practiced with justifying causes is morally good**

Rhythm is in the moral classification similar to that of the simple marriage act, and before it is justified it needs some good over and above the marriage good of faith (which justifies the simple marriage act). We now must consider what these justifying causes might be. To intend not to bring new human life into being, while at the same time placing the act which of its nature is apt to produce human life, is to deprive not only the man and wife, but also civil society and the Church of a good. It is not reasonable for a man to deprive himself of a good unless this deprivation is compensated for by the acquisition of an equal or greater good. To act reasonably in the matter of periodic continence, that is, without sin, man must always intend some compensating good which will justify this practice.

Pope Pius XII places under the four general headings of: "Medical, eugenic, economic, and social" the serious reasons which can exempt one from guilt in the use of the non-fertile periods alone, even for "the whole duration of marriage." Under these would certainly be included such reasons as the morally certain death or permanent ill health of the mother, insanity in the offspring, impossibility for the husband to provide for another child, and the desire on the part of the innocent spouse to keep the other from the serious sin of onanism or incontinence.

The reason most likely to be misunderstood and misused in practice is the economic one, the moral impossibility of supporting



another child, for it is not uncommon for married couples, save the very rich, to claim an insupportable financial burden attached to the birth and rearing of children, when in actuality this deprives them and the children already born merely of some of the luxuries to which they have become accustomed. This, however, would not constitute a moral impossibility of supporting another child and would not be a justifying cause for the use of periodic continence. We will consider this economic factor at greater length later on.

### **what about absolute continence?**

The justifying causes of periodic continence consist in the avoidance of some real evil, whether physical or moral. If periodic continence or absolute continence is not practiced, these evils cannot be avoided. Right reason dictates that man should do that which lies in his power, morally and physically, to avoid these evils. Our first reaction to this might be that these evils can and should be prevented by the practice of absolute continence. Certainly this is to be recommended, as our Holy Father recommends it in his address to the Midwives, and at times, because of the gravity of the evil to be avoided (for example, the well-founded probability of the death of the mother resulting from conception) charity might demand the use of this certain method of avoiding this danger rather than the less certain one of periodic continence. Absolute continence, however, is more easily recommended to married couples than practiced by them. Because of the intimate nature of the life they live it is most difficult for them to practice continence for a long period of time, and it is also dangerous morally speaking as St. Paul says: "Defraud not one another, except perhaps by consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency."

Another fact with regard to complete abstinence from the marriage act which cannot be totally ignored is that one of the secondary ends of the marital act is the fostering of mutual love. Frequently the mutual love between husband and wife would be permitted to cool through a lack of expression of this love in the manner provided by God. It must be recognized that man is not purely a spiritual being, but a spiritual-material creature elevated by grace, actually or potentially, to the supernatural level. All these elements, the material, spiritual, and the supernatural, must enter into any real love between husband and wife if their love is to be complete marriage love. A purely material love, a purely spiritual love, or a purely supernatural love between husband and

wife is not real marriage love, for it is the combination of all three which makes for a perfect love between man and woman.

**not the lesser of two evils**

The conclusion is, then, that periodic continence is morally good when it is practiced with justifying causes. Being morally good, it is an act directed to man's last end, a meritorious act. It is not a lesser of two evils, for it is not morally evil but good when thus justified. It must be remembered, however, that everything about an act must be good before the act can be said to be good, for any defect is sufficient to render evil something which is otherwise good. We are supposing here, when we say that periodic continence is morally good when justified by the presence of one or more of these causes, that other defects are not rendering the action evil. Then, and only then, can the act have its proper relationship and ordination to the last end of man.

**periodic continence practiced without justifying causes is morally evil**

Why do married couples practice periodic continence when there are present no justifying reasons for doing so? The obvious answer to this question is that they do so because they do not want to have children, or at least, not another child at this time. What is the reason for not wanting a child?

The only honest answer to this question will normally contain at the least some notion of the unwillingness on the part of one or both of the parties to make some sacrifice. A child, another child, or a child at this time will necessitate the sacrifice or loss of some good by the parents or children already born into the family. We are not, naturally, speaking now of those goods which are so great as prudently to be considered sufficient to justify periodic continence, but of lesser or imaginary goods. The wife, for example, does not wish to undergo the normal pains of childbirth, or she does not wish to "lose her figure" through pregnancy, or she does not wish to have to forego the freedom which she has had, the pleasure of partying, etc., as she will have to do during her confinement and the subsequent care of the young child. The husband, perhaps, is reluctant to expend the money necessary for a birth. Having a child might mean that they will have to do without a new automobile. A child will mean that the money they have been able to spend solely on themselves will have to be split three ways. These or similar motives are always behind the unjustified practice of periodic continence. They are the expression of a certain selfishness of character, of a defect which is, to say the least, not praiseworthy.



Expression of this same selfishness might be given in marriage in ways other than through the practice of periodic continence. It is possible to imagine, for example, a married couple practicing complete abstinence from the marital act solely because of their determination not to have children and who consider this the only "safe" way. If this determination is founded upon selfishness and not upon some good reason, it would make of even their complete abstinence something sinful. Admittedly this example is more speculative than practical, for selfish people are not likely to undergo the hardship or lack of pleasure entailed in complete abstinence, but we can consider that possibility and condemn it as evil. The evil, then, does not come from the performance or non-performance of the marital act, but from the end or reason why the act is performed or not performed.

### **ordinarily venially sinful**

The sin in the unjustified practice of periodic continence is not, as in other kinds of birth prevention, a sin against chastity. Provided that the act is properly placed, is placed only during the sterile period by mutual consent, that it not become the proximate occasion of sin, and is justified by the marriage good of mutual love, the only malice normally present would come from the selfish purposes of the married couple. These selfish purposes would reduce themselves to several different sins.

If the motive, for example, for the practice of periodic continence is the inordinate desire for wealth, the sin of avarice would be involved. If the ordinary pains of child-birth are the reason for avoiding conception, there is a sin against fortitude. And so on for other motives. These sins normally are not mortal, but venial. Normally, then, the sin involved in periodic continence is venial.

By this, however, we do not mean that mortal sin cannot be committed in this practice. When husband and wife limit their marital relations solely to the sterile period, especially when this practice results from the will of only one of the parties and is consented to reluctantly by the other (as might happen, for example, when the wife fears the pains of child-birth) there is the danger that when the other party asks the paying of the debt during fertile times he will be refused. This would be a grave sin.

Periodic continence can be a proximate occasion of sins against chastity. While one of the effects of the marital act is the allaying of concupiscence, this effect is not long-lived. It is true that the exercise of this faculty quiets the desire for a time, but it has also the effect of increasing its desire when this quieting effect



ends; so that in reality it becomes stronger. If this strong desire arises at a time when it cannot be satisfied according to the calendar, there is a strong impulse to seek satisfaction outside the marriage act. This impulse, of course, can be controlled and made, at most, a remote occasion of sin, but if it becomes a proximate occasion of sin against chastity, then the whole practice of Rhythm becomes an occasion of mortal sin, and, consequently, is in itself a mortal sin.

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the now generally realized fact that as with animals the time of fertility in the female coincides with the time of greatest sexual desire, so also with human beings. It is precisely during the time when she feels most inclined to the performance of the marital act that women who practice Rhythm are not free to do so. This could easily lead to sins against chastity.

### **Occasion of sin**

Other grave evils can also result from the practice of periodic continence. The evil of divorce is a possible result. It is well recognized statistically that one of the best safeguards against divorce is children in the family. A man and wife, selfishly preventing themselves from becoming parents, make their marriage much more vulnerable to the divorce courts.

Admittedly, then, periodic continence can be the occasion of sin in individual cases, but this is not in the very nature of the practice, even the unjustified practice, of periodic continence. We are not, therefore, justified in condemning the whole practice as a proximate occasion of sin just because this is true for some people. It would be just as unreasonable to condemn all drinking of alcoholic beverages as mortally sinful because it is the proximate occasion of mortal sin for some.

Our Holy Father, in his recent addresses on this subject, does not absolutely condemn the practice of periodic continence. He stresses the lawfulness of the practice under certain conditions; condemns explicitly only its universal and unjustified practice. It is not clear that he intended to condemn as mortally sinful the unjustified use of only the sterile period throughout the whole of married life. Such a possibility, however, must be admitted, especially as he places this as a sin against the "very meaning of conjugal life." Clarification on this point must await a more explicit teaching of the Holy See.

### **Practical considerations**

There is always a danger in an article of this nature in which periodic continence is not condemned as mortally sinful that it

might be considered as an approval of childless marriages or marriages of few children. This is far from our intention. It is one thing not to condemn an action as mortally sinful and quite another to approve of it. There are times and circumstances when the use of periodic continence is reasonable and virtuous; it is this use alone which we wish to approve. But even this, at times, will not be the ideal. It has been our purpose to point out how far one may go in this matter without committing sin, but we do not thereby advocate that persons go that far.

The indiscriminate use of periodic continence, limiting as it does the number of children born into the family, the State, and the Church, denying them members who contribute to their perfection, is not to be desired. The fact that the practice of birth control in all its forms has today become widespread, when it is "not fashionable" to have large families, has given to those misguided souls who are willing to go as far as they can short of mortal sin an excellent opportunity to be fashionable and still live with their conscience. Many married couples, imbibing the materialistic outlook on life, are beginning to seek in marriage only a material gain. Asked to give more than they receive in the material order, they lose interest and seek ways and means to avoid this lack of material return. Frequently this means few, if any, children, and all too often, the fewer the better.

### **marriage as a school of perfection**

St. Paul teaches that virginity is better than marriage. This does not mean, however, that the religious life or priesthood is better for all individuals than marriage. Any way of life is good for an individual insofar as it is for that person a means of salvation. If one person, considering his particular capabilities, can best work out his salvation in the married state, the married state is for him the best way of life. Whatever way of life is chosen, it must be chosen for love of God and as a means of salvation.

Marriage, then, is a state of life ordained ultimately to the union of the individual with God. Marriage is a means of salvation. Those who wish to enter marriage rightly must intend this end explicitly or implicitly, otherwise they are not seeking in marriage an end which is proper and good. To seek in marriage only material pleasure and advantages is to seek self and not God. How often is this not the end sought in marriage? By their fruits they are known, and all too frequently the fruits of marriage taste of self rather than of God.

Man was condemned to work out his salvation by sacrifice and toil, and there is no easy road to eternal beatitude. Whatever



way of life man elects as his means of salvation, he will find that it demands sacrifice of him. A man would be foolish to choose the religious life as the road he will walk with the initial and perpetual sacrifices contained in the three vows of religion which constitute this state, at the same time figuring out all possible ways and means at his disposal to avoid these sacrifices short of mortal sin. It is just as foolish for one to enter marriage with all its sacrifices, trying to avoid to the best of his ability the necessity of making these sacrifices.

Properly understood marriage is not a state of life permitted to man solely to help him avoid mortal sin. Marriage is a school of sacrifice, a school of perfection. All too often, if we may judge by his action, modern man's only interest in sacrifices is how to avoid them, nor is he concerned with spiritual perfection, which he leaves to those who wish to fly the world and dedicate themselves to God; it has no place in the life of one living in the world. Therefore the sacrifices entailed in marriage in the begetting, supporting, and education of children are to be avoided by means short of mortal sin, if possible, and thus many "good" Catholics act; others scout even the notion of sin, and act as they wish.

Nor should those married persons feel complacent in this matter who have decided that they will have one or two children and make the sacrifices necessary to clothe, feed, and educate them. There are, admittedly, sacrifices entailed in this, but the sacrifices are not as great as are the returns. The joy and pleasure accruing to parents from their one child or from their two children far outweigh normally any sacrifice demanded of them by reason of these children. The one or two-child family, "planned" that way, rightly merits the title of "selfish" family when there is no just cause for such limitation.

### **how "natural" is Rhythm?**

The proponents of Rhythm frequently speak of this system as the "natural method of birth control," the means provided by nature to limit or eliminate children in marriage. It is natural only in the sense that no artifact is used in actual marital relations; but it is an unnatural manner of married life to permit the consummation of their love only when the calendar is right, to avoid it when they feel the time is right but the calendar is wrong. Making love by the calendar is not natural. On this point let us hear a married woman who is in a position to know the unnaturalness of a periodic expression and repression of love. Sally McHugh, writing in *Extension* magazine, admits that she and her husband tried this system but found it wanting. Her chief objec-

tions against it are three. First, living together under this system becomes a constant source of irritation and frustration; secondly, the sterile time frequently finds the woman "apathetic or actively opposed" to relationship with her husband which leads her to disgust for him and him to doubts about her love; thirdly, when a baby does arrive, through plan or error, the mother dare not risk nursing her child and thereby cause a cessation of the menses, for the system is planned around the menses.

Much, then, is wrong with Rhythm from a practical viewpoint, independently of any moral consideration. These practical considerations should cause any couple to think twice before adopting it as a manner of life, and do so only when the practical evils resulting from the birth of a child are very grave indeed. These considerations should make priests very reluctant to counsel this method to married people and to follow the wise directives of the Church to insinuate this method cautiously only as a last resort to prevent the penitent from continuing in the sin of onanism.

We are never wise in being wiser than the Church, and it is just this some priests are attempting to be in not following Her advice, for example, when a priest finishes his pre-marital instructions by giving each engaged couple a copy of a book on Rhythm, or preachers of week-end retreats explain the advantages of periodic continence. This attitude of approval on the part of the priests has led to the teaching of this method in our Catholic colleges and medical schools, giving to the laity the notion that the Church approves this method and to young doctors the assumption that they are free to recommend this system to all.

With these previous considerations in mind, what conclusion may we reach as to the proper position and attitude of mind to be assumed by Catholics in this question of periodic continence?

### **the Catholic laity and Rhythm**

That there is such a thing as periodic sterility and fertility in women all Catholic adults can safely be presumed to know, thanks to the amount of literature which has appeared on the subject in recent years, particularly in the United States, and to the diffusion of knowledge by word of mouth on the method of limiting children by this "natural" method. Few Catholic parents indeed can bring into the world children in frequent succession without some solicitious relative or friend giving free advice on the matter of Rhythm. There can be no question, then, of secrecy, for the fact of Rhythm is too widely known.

While knowledge of the fact of Rhythm is so widely spread, knowledge of the morality of this practice has not kept pace with



it. The Catholic laity have generally adopted the attitude that this is the "Catholic method of birth-control." Being either incapable of understanding fine distinctions or unwilling to accept these distinctions as long as they know of one book written by a priest approving this system or have the authority of any priest to justify the practice, they conclude that periodic continence is morally correct and the mere fact that a married couple wishes not to have offspring is sufficient reason for adopting this method.

It is better for the layman not to attempt to judge the right to limit offspring, either for himself or for his relatives and friends. He should have recourse to someone trained to make judgments in moral matters, namely his confessor. The confessor should be presented with the reasons why the person considers himself justified in practicing periodic continence, and the judgment of the confessor should be followed. This does not mean that one must obtain the "consent of his confessor" before he may practice periodic continence, as we have sometimes heard the laity express it, but it is merely the prudent manner of proceeding to obtain advice before acting from one who is better qualified to pass an objective judgment in any matter in which there can be grave consequences. It is also axiomatic that no one should be a judge in his own case.

If the laity will practice this prudence in the question of periodic continence, the possibility of great evils, rightly to be feared as following from the system, will be greatly diminished.

### **the Catholic priest and Rhythm**

Since the primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children, the production of creatures capable of attaining eternal beatitude and the training of them to attain that end, preachers and confessors ought to stress the lofty purpose of marriage and strive to lead the faithful to realize its nobleness, and the honor and privilege that is theirs in co-operating with God in the production of immortal creatures. They should be shown the nature of marriage as a school of perfection in which sacrifices not only are to be expected but should be welcomed as a means of obtaining their ultimate goal. The faithful must be urged to avoid self-seeking, to shun a materialistic life wherein an immortal soul is weighed against some material luxury and, all too frequently, suffers by comparison.

Never, either publicly or privately, should priests approve periodic continence as if it were something good in itself and good under all circumstances, for it can be the occasion of grave sin and

frequently, due to the lack of a just cause, is venially sinful. To give unqualified approval to periodic continence can easily lead to scandal. When the priest is asked about the morality of this practice, he must answer with the proper qualifications and distinctions. Never, however, should the priest attempt to solve the practical problems involved in the use of this system. When he judges that a person has a just cause for limiting children the priest should recommend to him a good Catholic doctor. It is well for the priest making such a recommendation to warn the married person that Rhythm is not an infallible method of preventing conception, although it is morally certain to attain this end if the advice of the doctor is carefully followed. The person should be prepared, therefore, to accept any child conceived in spite of the precautions of this system.

Priests should avoid being advocates of sterility in their writings, sermons, and private conferences. It is not good for them to seek to obtain among the laity the title of being "broad-minded" or one who "understands" the problems married people have, and how to avoid them when they are faced only with the normal sacrifices entailed in raising a large family. No priest would consider himself as fulfilling his duty if he addressed a group of religious on how they, short of mortal sin, can avoid the normal sacrifices of religious life; is he fulfilling his duty if he tells married couples how to be "sterile though fertile," how they can avoid the material inconveniences of having a family when they have no just cause for doing so?

### **the Catholic doctor and Rhythm**

Catholic medical men, and especially gynecologists, have done much to advance knowledge of the physiology of periodic continence through scientifically controlled experimentations. They have made a real contribution to science, proving the efficacy of this system often in the face of scepticism on the part of their fellow scientists, and as Pope Pius XII was previously quoted as saying, we can hope that they will find an even more solid foundation for this system. They have made, also, a real contribution to the Catholic laity who have a good cause for the limitation of offspring. Previously the only course open to them morally was that of total abstinence. Many, unwilling to make this sacrifice, have had recourse to illicit means of birth-control. These medical men, anxious to present to such people a remedy against this evil practice, have through their writings and private consultations made known the method of periodic continence. The good they have accomplished in this matter cannot be over-estimated.



Catholic doctors should continue in the same ideal as that which impelled the pioneers in their work with periodic continence. Just as priests should send the people to Catholic doctors for advice on the practical aspects of this system when they judge there is sufficient reason for the practice, so also the doctor should not attempt to settle the moral aspects of the problem for the individuals but advise them to consult a priest to determine its lawfulness in their particular case. He should not indiscriminately determine the sterile times, hand out charts, etc., to all seeking this knowledge, but only to such persons as he is prudently certain have just reasons for obtaining it. As it is the doctor's duty not to take life but to save it, so also it would seem to be his duty not to prevent life but to foster it.

### **conclusion**

Periodic continence should be recognized for what it really is. It is not a solution for all the problems of married life. It can, however, have a very definite place in the Catholic way of life as a remedy against grave physical or moral evils, and it seems it was for this reason that the knowledge of this method was God-given at this time. Now, when the knowledge of and the practice of intrinsically evil means of birth-control have become so widespread, God has permitted this intrinsically indifferent means to be made known in order to counteract this evil. It is as such that it should be accepted by all Catholics, by priests, doctors, and the laity alike, as a means to overcome grave evil, physical or moral. It is not the "Catholic method of birth-control." At best, it is the "unhappy compromise."

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### **CUSTOM PRESCRIBES**

**The position of the father**

**Is often quite pathetic.**

**He's the one who has the child**

**Without an anesthetic.**

# Creative Pain

**A** philosophy of pain is important for any Christian; it is especially so for a mother. Elaine Malley, who lives in New York City and has three children, writes of the pain of childbirth.

**Elaine Malley:** To the mind that sees man as rising by his own power from the primitive morass of an ever-evolving process, pain is an affront, an attempt on the part of the dark sub-human past to reach out and reclaim its liberated offshoot. The more materialistic the approach, the more it sees man as trampling under his modern feet such tell-tale associations with his lowly origin as pain, sweat, travail. With the aid of analgesic drugs on the one hand and labor-saving machinery on the other, he sees himself fast approaching an ethereal state of well-being in which he will be immune to such aboriginal indignities.

We are by nature solicitous for the weal of our flesh. It has always been our tendency to avoid grieving it whenever possible. But to believe that we have a right to a painless existence and that by our own cunning we can contrive to effect such a state is something new on the face of the earth. Three hundred years before Christ, Menander, the Greek poet, said: "Being human, never ask heaven for a life free from pain; ask rather for the courage to endure." The pagan philosophers' realistic acceptance of pain has always seemed to me a sign of that humility and simplicity that could mean only one thing: preparation by the Holy Spirit for the coming glory of Christianity.

## vocation to pain

That pain is the result of a disorder is an axiom that leads many to seek in all suffering a cause in physical disorder. The disorder of the soul resulting from original sin must also be taken into account. The Christian acknowledges suffering as essentially his due on two counts: as the symbol and consequence of his bondage to sin under his father, Adam; and as the symbol and instrument of his redemption from sin under his Lord, Jesus Christ. The pains of childbirth are very specially implicated in humanity's fallen condition. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," God promised Eve on the day of her banishment from Paradise. Tradition has it that Our Lady, being sinless, bore her Divine Son in miraculous freedom from pain. But, for all her innocence, she

became our fellow-sufferer and exemplar when she gave birth to His Mystical Body in excruciating anguish of soul at the foot of the Cross.

The terrible ordeal of childbirth, the mounting paroxysms of agony that rack the whole being, need more to explain them than is warranted by the bare facts of the physical process of creation. A prospective mother has, in a sense, a mystical vocation to pain.

### **physical preparation**

This does not mean that she is not morally free to avail herself of some of the merciful analgesic products that science has put at her disposal. Civilization, after all, owes her some measure of respite, for it has cruelly intensified her ordeal. Nothing in our educational process prepares a woman for the physical heroism of childbirth. The muscles she uses at this time are either completely underdeveloped because of the sedentary life she has led, or knotted and tense from competition in athletic sports meant chiefly for men.

To prepare adequately for a "natural" delivery would mean partaking in the activities of a primitive woman: long walks, barefooted; some swimming, not too strenuous; working in a squatting position for several hours a day (scrubbing clothes or grinding meal); rhythmic dancing, which uses the whole body (not the rigid calisthenics of ballet, and certainly not adagio!); bowing, kneeling, genuflecting, kissing the ground. All of these acts performed, not as artificial special exercises, and not just during pregnancy, but from early youth, as part of the daily routine of worship and work and recreation, with all the dignity invested in practical service and the observance of the social amenities.

### **psychological preparation**

On the psychological level, too, preparation for motherhood is grievously deficient. It used to be regarded as an all-embracing vocation, the only alternative to the religious life, into which all of a woman's talents could be poured. Today her talents have been "liberated" and claim their own glamorous vocations, competing with motherhood on the same plane, and with far superior incentive to the ego. It takes more than the biological approach ("Children fulfill the organic destiny of a woman"); more than the sentimental approach (eulogizing softness and cuddlesomeness and the patter of little feet); more, even, than the moralistic approach ("What is a Christian home without children?") to offset the fact that for our age child-bearing has been robbed of its tremendous supernatural significance, which has, in turn, divested



it of social dignity. Because of the collapse of faith, because of the modern despair that sees life not as a gift, but as a condemnation to death, the procreation of children is, to many, a horrible prospect. Children have become an economic hazard, a drawback in practically every phase of modern endeavor. Entire nations are at present engaged in a crusade against children, who, if allowed to be born, would demand their share of the war-depleted national resources.

In our country it is the luxury items that crowd them out. And if they manage to break through the barricades of contraception and Rhythm, and escape abortion, they are treated as an abnormal physical growth, like a tumor, a failure in hygiene, the contraction of a preventable disease of nine months' duration. It is difficult to distinguish between the operating chamber and the delivery room.

The tell-tale word that gives away the whole picture is the one by which women inform their friends of what used to be referred to as "being in the family way": "*caught*."

Caught. Trapped. Sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, ending either in death or in life-long slavery. This is the state of mind in which many women await their accouchement. In vain do doctors and psychiatrists inveigh against fear. The forces of the society that engender it are too strong to be withstood by the average woman, without supernatural help.

### **natural apprehension**

However favorable the social conditions, with barrenness a reproach and children at a premium, there is a certain low-tide during pregnancy when a woman dreads the experience awaiting her. This apprehension is a natural, healthy constituent of human suffering. The ability to experience pain in advance and in retrospect is the element that differentiates human pain from that of animals. It intensifies suffering and protracts its effects; but it is the one thing that makes it possible for us to summon the forces necessary to bear it, and to turn it to account by making of it a prayer, a sacrifice, an offering of self. It is easy to see how, in a faithless society, this faculty can also be the source of agonizing frustration.

### **trained childbirth**

In pointing out that the exaggerated pain and nervous tension attending pregnancy and childbirth can be largely attributed to our present-day social disorders, I am not advocating the return of our civilization to its aboriginal past. False primitivism is retrogressive, anachronistic, and hypocritical, and as phony in the

sociological field as it is in the arts. We are inextricably bound up with our age; it is our habitation in time; and, in however small a measure, some power to shape it has been given to each of us. For all its corruption (what age has not had its own?) it is rich in new beginnings, new attempts at integration.

One of the heartening trends in the field of obstetrics is the development of "trained childbirth" clinics, where prospective mothers are taught to develop those muscles which they will need at the time of delivery, and to use their native faculties in order to bring about as natural a birth as possible, without anesthetics.

They function more or less on the theory that prospective parents (both mother and father) should know all that it is possible to know about the physical and psychological forces that are called into play to produce a new human being upon the earth. That this knowledge makes it possible for the mother to relax and thus, rid of the fear of the unknown, make efficacious use of her pains when they come. That both mother and father can share and participate in a highly satisfying pregnancy and delivery. They also encourage rooming-in and breast-feeding.

"Graduate" parents are enthusiastic. Mothers were not shut off from the work of creation by an anesthetic. Their minds and bodies were alive during the act, toiling, straining, *creating*. Fathers did not pace the floor and chain-smoke in the waiting room while their child was being born. Nobody had to tell *them* what sex it was. It was *their* baby, they helped all the way. A new mother says: "I felt we had all shared in a miracle."

Thus a cosseted generation, inured to ease and comfort, is discovering, with fascinated wonder, that pain can be creative, that it can be acquiesced in and used, with love, to bring about the most wonderful thing in the world—a new human being. Truly the Holy Ghost "broods over the bent world with—ah!—bright wings!"

### **light of divine love**

It is not enough, however, to restore childbed from the morbid shadows of pathology to its rightful place as a natural and richly satisfying experience. In a world shuddering with spiritual despair, nothing could be more revolting than the spectacle of well-meaning people replenishing the earth because having babies has been discovered to be such a gratifying experience (if such a phenomenon could ever take place!). The only valid reason for having a baby is that God wants that baby to be born.

The true Christian seeks in life neither pain nor freedom from pain (though his human weakness may shrink from it inad-

vertently; and in his compassion for his fellowmen he will do all that he can to spare them). What he seeks is to follow his Savior in the accomplishment of the will of His heavenly Father. This will lead him over an uneven path, sometimes smooth and sometimes thorny. It is in the rough places, however, that he is likely to become conscious of supernatural assistance. Warmed by this Presence, he develops that Christian "toughness" which looks to the outsider so much like stoicism, but which in reality is nothing but holy indifference resulting from abandonment of the soul to God.

The mystery of pain, of the particular all-engrossing pain attending childbirth, can never be fathomed unless it is seen in the light of divine love. It is impossible to understand the physical and psychological forces that are called into play to produce a new human being unless one takes into account the divine Source of life.

### **no apology needed**

Incidentally, not only the secular world has contributed to the "inferiority complex" that afflicts motherhood. The apologetic tone of some of the prayers that are considered appropriate for mothers to say points an accusing finger at a sort of spiritual snobbery on the part of the authors of those prayers. They run something like this: "I do not have time to meditate and say a lot of prayers. So please accept the humble work of my hands." The widow who gave her mite did not say: "I do not have a million dollars to put in the plate. So please accept my humble mite." She gave her mite, which was her all, with dignity. A woman who is bringing children into the world has no need to be coy with God.

Before Christ was born the whole world was in travail and every pregnant mother was identified with that travail. Since His coming, the world undergoes that travail anew for every soul that comes into the world, in honor of Him Who came to us "that we might have life and have it more abundantly." He has shown us how to have that life by patiently and meekly accepting His Cross—an acceptance that led Him through ignominy and torture and loneliness and pain—to death itself. It was with the coin of His shame and pain and death that He bought for us everlasting life.

The woman who consents to motherhood is given a share in His sacrifice. She also must accept humiliation and pain and loneliness. She must also buy a new life with her own. She becomes a figure of death—the tomb—out of which the resurrection is en-



acted anew in every child she gives to light. Such is the dignity of motherhood.

According to the teaching of the Church, she fulfills the dictum: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," even if she accepts an anesthetic at the time of delivery, for she has borne during pregnancy enough humiliation through her clumsy proportions, and enough discomfort in morning sickness and shortness of breath, not to mention the countless individual irregularities that may attend her condition, to fulfill it adequately. But it remains true that there is nothing equal to the exhilaration that fills the heart of the woman who, out of love, undergoes the passion of giving birth with open eyes and every sense alive to its stupendous discipline.

### **joy out of sorrow**

The things that seem so real to us here are but images of a fuller Reality, as fatherhood in the world is but a reflection of the Fatherhood of God. Human birth is an image of a unique and universal spiritual experience. Every time Our Lord spoke of it, it was in terms of human birth: "Unless a man be born again he shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." "A woman when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow: but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man shall take from you."

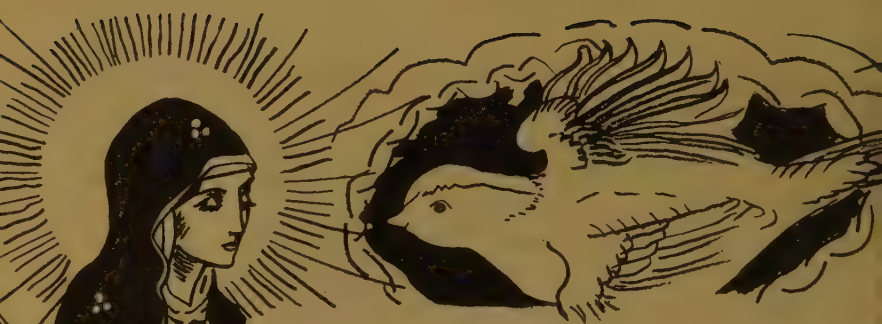
A woman in childbirth experiences in her flesh the drama that, in the spirit, brings every soul from darkness to light: the death of the old man, the birth of Christ.

This is what I meant by the tremendous supernatural significance of childbearing. This is what I meant when I said that a prospective mother has a mystical vocation to pain. This is the truth that nourished the mothers of yesterday who raised big families because that was what God asked of them. And this is the light that burns in the hearts of all the brave young mothers of today who are going against the current of the world, accepting every child God wills, with all the sacrifices it entails, for what it is—God's gift of infinite love.

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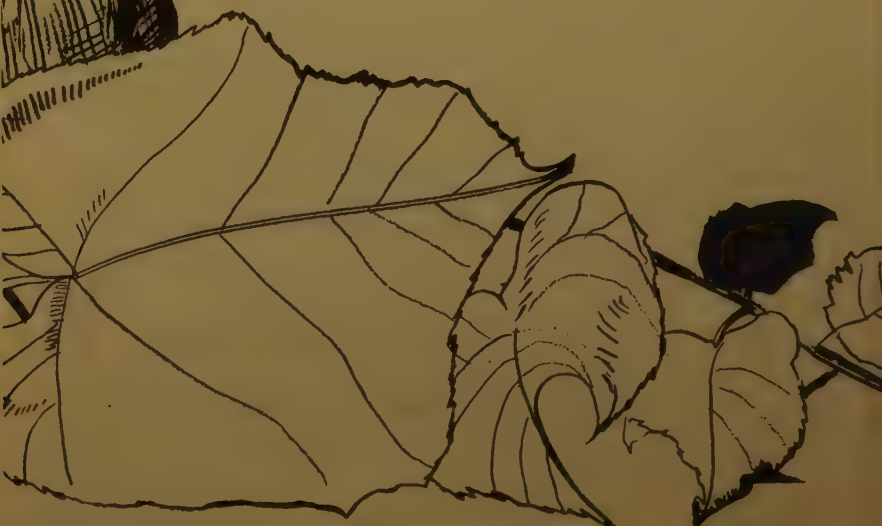
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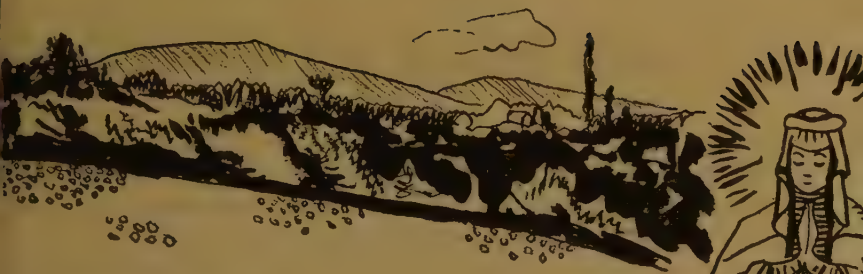
(Incidentally, the **THINKER'S DIGEST** is an interesting quarterly containing the best thought-provoking articles. Four sample copies can be obtained for a dollar.)



Then the power from on high overshadowed unto begetting the Maid untouched; and he showed her fruitful womb as a meadow sweet to all who sought to reap salvation, as thus he sang:  
Alleluia.

Then the Maid of the God-bearing womb hastened unto Elizabeth; whose babe, knowing straightway her greeting, rejoiced and with stirrings as if with song cried out to God's forth-bringer:





Hail! vine of an unwithering shoot.

Hail! yielder of untainted fruit.

Hail! thou who unto life hast brought  
Him Who bringeth death to life.

Hail! field with mercies harvest rich.

Hail! board with load of pities spread.

Hail! flower-strewn meadow.

Hail! thou who the soul's safe anchorage  
preparest.

Hail! grateful incense cloud of prayer.

Hail! the whole world's offering of peace.

Hail! God's goodness unto men.

Hail! man's trustfulness in God.

Hail! Bride unbridled.

—*Akathistos Hymn to Mary*





# Our Rebirth in Christ

**Benedict A. Ehmann:** It were little profit to be born, if there were no chance for us to be reborn. This is a bold statement, but it is the Church who makes it and chooses for its utterance the most solemn service of the year—the Easter Vigil. And instinctively we remember another night in which two men were conversing about birth and rebirth, and one of them was the Lord Jesus. And He said that a man had to be born again if he hoped to see the kingdom of God. But the other, whose name was Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees who respected the Lord, could not understand, even though he was a teacher in Israel. And he said so to the Lord, being quite literal-minded and apparently without imagination, wondering how a man could return to his mother's womb, and be born again. So the Lord was careful to unfold His meaning: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." You can find this nocturnal lesson in the first part of chapter 3 of St. John's Gospel.

## in the beginning

Adam and Eve, our parents first in line, were splendid beings in the full ensemble and panoply of their human endowments. But all this was as nothing in comparison with the divine endowment of sanctifying grace, transfiguring their nature with a created sharing in God's nature, elevating them not only to the rank but to the very estate of children of God. They were not only creatures; they were very son and daughter of almighty God, not by nature but by adoption.

This sublime estate was, according to the plan of God, to be transmitted to their children and to all the human race descended from them, simply by birth. Being born of Adam and Eve's race was to have been, by God's grant, the royal patent to sanctifying grace. But the holy and gracious plan was flaunted by original sin, and the royal patent was withdrawn. Small wonder if God's curse had stifled the power of generation, supplanting them with another, newly-made, couple to carry on the procreation of the race. Not so, however. God would go on with Adam and Eve. Their sentence would not debar them from parenthood of the human race. But they would be parents of only a fragile and

mortal life: their descendants would be "children of wrath," and the life they would give would be a brief candle lighting the way to "dusty death."

If this kind of twilight life and birth-unto-death were all, then indeed the Adversary from hell might be ceded the last laugh over Omnipotent Love. Then indeed it were better for us if we had never been born. But divine Power and Love would not be thwarted, and the Adversary would be checkmated by another move of God, in which the instruments of his defeat would be the same by which he rashly thought to defeat God.

The original plan of God was "wonderful"; the new plan will be even "more wonderful." The gift of divine life will be restored, but from a new source. Another man will be constituted by God and sent to become the source of the grace of divine life. He will be the very Son of God Himself, the "Word made flesh," and His human nature will be substantially united to the divine nature of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

This is the "mystery . . . hidden from eternity in God," hinted at in God's cryptic promise that He will place enmities between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed, and that she and her issue would crush the serpent's head. Through the dark centuries and epochs of the patriarchs and prophets, and in the travail of elected Israel, the mystery slowly comes to birth, until at last, "in the fulness of time," it is manifested in Jesus Christ. Son of God, He is sent by the Father to restore fallen man to the estate of "sons of God." Of His mission, Jesus says: "I am come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

### **necessary death**

But first, the old Adam, the man of sin, must be put to death; retribution must be made, and due punishment exacted for the offence against God's justice and goodness. Before there could be "life unto God," there had to be "death unto sin." And so the Lord bore in Himself our sins and submitted Himself to the scourge of the Father's justice, becoming a crucified outcast and dying upon a tree. That dying was our dying. "We know that our old self has been crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, that we may no longer be slaves to sin; for he who is dead is acquitted of sin." But, having died and thus put the "old Adam" to death, the Savior must rise from the dead, not

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only to prove His claim to be the Son of God (so often the theme of Easter sermons), but also and perhaps more importantly to give us the new life of grace and so become for us "the new Adam."

Consider in this light the words of St. Paul: "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Christ; for we know that Christ, having risen from the dead, dies now no more; death shall no longer have dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life that he lives, he lives unto God. Thus do you consider yourselves also as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

"In Christ Jesus": there is the pregnant phrase. As we were in Adam (fallen Adam, alas!), flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, so we were "in Christ Jesus," for He represented us, nay more, He bore us, nailing our old Adam with Himself on the cross, and putting it to death, being buried in death as well as in the tomb, and then rising from the dead, the First-born of a new race, the Source and Fountainhead of all the redeemed. St. Paul assures the Colossians that "when you were dead by reason of your sins . . ., he brought (you) to life along with him, forgiving you all your sins, cancelling the decree against us."

### **the Redemption localized**

Jesus is the "second Adam" Whose obedience "even unto death" countermanded the disobedience of the first Adam, and so restored the life of God unto those "who believe in his name." But these, born of the will of the flesh, must be reborn "of God." It was for this that our Savior instituted Baptism. Through it we are incorporated into Christ, and the supernatural energy of His death and resurrection are engrafted upon our souls.

When a person is baptized, be he babe or adult, there is actualized in him and for him what Christ accomplished in His death and resurrection. Baptism simply individualizes for each of us the timeless and universal act of Redemption accomplished by Christ. As our birth separates us from nothingness, grants us a being, and gives us the life of Adam, our baptismal rebirth in its turn separates us from sin, grants us a supernatural status, and gives us the life of God "in Christ Jesus."

The performance of Baptism may be simple and brief, but it bears an immense weight of signature and causality. It is no word-play or legerdemain of metaphors to compare Baptism to the waters of that Flood which drowned the sinful world and carried the ancestry of a new world within the Ark that rode upon its crest; or to the water of the Red Sea through which the Hebrews passed unharmed while the tyrant Pharaoh and his army were



drowned. The time chosen by the will of the Father for the atoning death and resurrection of His Son was the week of the Passover, that sublime annual commemoration of the Jewish deliverance from Egypt. Mankind's deliverance from a darkness and slavery worse than those of Egypt is a paschal mystery, and the baptismal water that is poured out upon man is fraught with the Blood of the Lamb.

### **in newness of life**

Christians are a race ransomed from the oldness (*vetustas*) of sin and death, and introduced into the newness (*novitas*) of divine life. They are the "twice-born," or (perhaps better) the "reborn." It is a constant point in the teaching of St. Paul that Christians ought therefore walk "in newness of life." This "newness" surely implied for those who had reached the use of reason a conversion, a hearkening to that *metanoieite* with which the Savior opens His Gospel. "Change your minds," "turn them away from your old self to the new man who is formed in you." What is new in fact should surely be new in mind and deed.

How confidently and urgently St. Paul presses this point home! "*Therefore* do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts. And do not yield your members to sin as weapons of iniquity, but present yourselves to God as those who have come to life from the dead and your members as weapons of justice for God."

Justice in St. Paul is *dikaiosisyne*, the whole life of grace and holiness which the Christian derives from Christ. After telling his Colossians that they "have died and (their) life is hidden with Christ in God," he hurries to the inescapable "therefore": "Therefore mortify your members, which are on earth: immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, covetousness. . . . Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the unbelievers, and you yourselves once walked in them when they were your life. But now do you also put them away: anger, wrath, malice, abusive language and foul-mouthed utterances. Do not lie to one another. Strip off the old man with his deeds and put on the new one that is being renewed unto perfect knowledge 'according to the image of his Creator.'"

The "new man" is to "put on therefore . . . a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Bear with one another and forgive one another, if anyone has a grievance against any other. . . . But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection. . . . Show yourselves thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly: in all wisdom teach and ad-

monish one another by psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing in your hearts to God by his grace. Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

These lengthy excerpts are justified by the vivid contrast they establish between the "old man" and the "new man," between the men of one birth and those of the second birth. Baptism is no mere initiation, no mere ritual. Its transfiguration of the soul with the image of the Crucified and Risen Savior creates a profound (though not substantial) change which calls at the same time for a reformation from ways and habits of sin, and a conformation to Christ, the Model and Exemplar of life unto God.

### **"Adam" long a-dying**

It should be observed that St. Paul describes the "new man" as "being renewed." Though Baptism destroys original sin, the slain Adam in each of us is long a-dying—which might be called a poet's way of expressing the truth that in the baptized the effects of original sin remain even after the sin itself is destroyed in us by Baptism. These effects are a proneness to evil, a darkness in the mind, a weakness of the will, and a concupiscence of the passions. God intends that we are to have some active part in our salvation—that our works, in virtue of the grace of Christ, are to be meritorious and have a certain efficiency of their own in bringing us to the glory of heaven, and that, among these works, is to be the conquest of our ignorance and of the downward drag of our Adam-derived nature.

Our baptismal rebirth, then, does not make us full-grown saints, no more than our birth produced us as mature adults. The God-given life which Baptism gives us is like a seed, and it is expected to grow and develop in us. This applies to that double principle of energy which Baptism implants within us from Christ: "death to sin" is not, for us, death once for all, but a constant dying; "life to God" is not, here and now, the full light of glory, but a slow and often painful thrusting and maturing of the seed of grace into every cranny of our nature.

Every renunciation of sin and beating back of temptation, every act of penance, every refusal of the Devil and his works, proceeds from and is energized by our baptismal "death to sin": we are "always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus." And at the same time every prayer and aspiration toward God, every work of mercy in the name of Christ, every deed of patience and charity, are all an affirmation, an expression of our baptismal "life to God."

So, while our outward man approaches the hour of death, our inward man is being constantly renewed and increased in the grace and holiness of Jesus. Death and the penumbra of the declining years cast a shadow of melancholy upon the spirit of man, and more and more urgently as time moves on we stretch out our unavailing hands to the wraiths of the past. It takes an effort of will and the nudging of grace to keep us looking forward to where the best is waiting. Browning was more right than he perhaps knew when he had "Rabbi Ben Ezra" soliloquize,

"Grow old along with me,

The best is yet to be,

The last of life for which the first was made,"

O. F. M.

to which St. Paul gives the last word, "Wherefore do not lose heart. On the contrary, even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For our present light affliction, which is for the moment, prepares for us an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all measure; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."

### Gold for eternal life

We are born to die, but we are reborn to live forever, and the miracle is that this rebirth in grace is achieved and brought to maturity within the arena of this Adam-nature of ours, not destroying nature, but building on it, and perfecting it. Within the matrix of our mortal coil the man of glory is being formed who will reign with Christ unendingly, if we persevere unto the end. In the purgative way of dying to sin and in the illuminative and unitive way of living unto God, all things human become instruments of grace and depositories of heavenly coin, and nothing is too trivial for the divine mintage.

Joy, then, and confidence should transfigure the Christian, no matter what his lot may be. In him is the image of the Crucified and Risen Savior, upon him is the loving gaze and smile of the Father, and in his grasp is the alchemy which transmutes all things, prosperous or adverse, into gold for eternal life, until the day comes, not without dread, when "this mortal shall put on immortality," and the soul, full-fledged, shall mount to the Father Who gave it rebirth of life in Christ Jesus His Son. Happy birthday, this day of our death, birthday into eternal life, the *natalitia* of which the early Christians sang with praise as they bore away the mangled bodies of their martyr kin to the quiet catacombs.



# Letter to a Lady

**Dear Blessed Mother,**

The doctor has told me on the telephone that the laboratory report was positive. Another baby is on the way.

I wanted to tell you, for now I need your help more than ever. I want to ask you to take this child under your protection and if God wills to give it to us safely.

Actually the test was just a formality as far as I was concerned. I already knew, by that other, unscientific certainty.

For it is only in myths and sentimental lore that life's coming is a gentle and delicate thing. In reality it is somewhat ruthless. One is aware very early of the presence of an alien being. Even unborn, so small and helpless, the child demands its individual right to being. Its soul is already there, purposefully forming those few primitive cells, drawing them toward the wonderful complexity that is human nature. Secretly, relentlessly, the new person goes toward that unique destiny that shall be his alone, that has from eternity existed for him in the mind of Almighty God.

Many thoughts crowd my mind tonight, some trivial, some more profound. You must have had some of these thoughts too. Many good and reasonable arguments have been given in defense of babies, of motherhood. But they do not seem apropos just at this moment. It seems to me you are the one to speak to now. More than any other woman you have known what it is to give life.

Yet with you, as with us, it is God Who gives it. It is a miracle every time. The gift is in His hands alone. We need only accept it with gratitude.

Your sublime reply to the angel comes down to us as clearly as at the moment of its utterance so long ago. And even our small individual *fiat* can have an echo beyond our own pathetic span of years. Those who today find the grace to have children as God wills them throw a terrible challenge in the teeth of some who hate life and work for its destruction.

\* \* \*

One day years ago I spent some hours going through the Metropolitan Museum. Unable to take in so much art at once

I wandered through the vast corridors, wearied and overwhelmed by solemn heavy masterpieces. Only one thing impressed me that day—Rodin's "Hand of God" that I passed on a staircase. Nothing else has ever seemed to me to express so dramatically that mystery by which we are taken from nothing in order that we may know and glorify God.

I thought about that mighty hand two years ago as I sat in a coldly formal office awaiting the doctor's verdict. He shook his head. The prospects for a baby were certainly not good. He didn't want to advise me. I was too weak, too underweight, too enervated by recent illnesses. All we had of our first child was the blessed hope that by a marvel of divine mercy it had seen heaven before it saw the earth.

I left that office terribly depressed. I foresaw how many difficulties were coming, and I knew I wasn't one to make light of them. Yet as the weeks went by I saw many wonders. I saw how even a frail organism that can hardly support its own existence can nevertheless at God's bidding manage the tremendous task of supporting another. Certainly I felt the aid of more than natural powers. But I knew these powers were not being exercised for me alone. I was the instrument by which God had determined to fulfill His divine purpose.

The prayers of many helped. Medicine helped. Our little girl was born, traditionally lively and indignant, on one of your great feast days.

When we brought her to the church for Baptism she was nine days old. As we entered, the priest on the altar was just raising the Blessed Sacrament at the moment of Benediction. In our happiness we felt as if Our Lord had extended to our little one an especially gracious welcome. She has your name.

"He who is mighty has done great things for me." Surely it can happen again, or many times.

\* \* \*

But when we accept the privilege of parenthood we accept something very wonderful in itself. Who could turn away from that almost tragic innocence of a young child? But we know we are undertaking much more than the enjoyment of those endearing moments of infancy and early childhood. We also accept the restless heavy days of waiting, hours of sickness and tiresome distress, nights of discomfort that make sleep a phantom, the day of deliverance described I think by Dorothy Day as "a mortal struggle." Yes, and after that the groping cries at night, the diapers piling up, the messy mopping of spilled food, the day-by-

day, hour-by-hour surrender of one's freedom to the needs of another.

For you it meant suspicion and anxiety, a long hard journey when you were ill fit to travel, a door shut in your face in the hour of need, the cave warmed only by the moist breath of animals.

For you it was fleeing at night from Herod's terrible revenge, living in poverty and among strangers, loneliness, separation, Calvary—the seven swords.

\* \* \*

I can't help thinking of our own small plans that may have to be put aside now, at least for a while. And of the added strain to our never-balanced budget. And most of all, the long months of physical handicap, depressing fatigue, the discouraging struggle back to strength. If only I could take these things in stride—but from the physical standpoint the thought of another child is almost appalling.

One thing seems so clear to me. God knows some of us would never willingly undertake any mortification sufficient for salvation. Some of us would only fall helpless before the bared arm of His justice. So He extends an invitation by the tiny curled fingers of a newborn child. Who could refuse a cross so sweetly disguised, the prize so near at hand—a child's smile of love and trust.

Yet we know it is a cross made to fit perfectly, to destroy most completely our pride, our selfishness, our self-pity, our own will, our fears that flaunt God's power. In some ways I am like the religious who hopes for heaven if she can but keep her rule from day to day. The bearing and care of children is also a rule, not less inflexible for all its compensations.

\* \* \*

Tonight I see you kneeling again in the house of Nazareth. You are talking with an angel. I hear you saying "Be it done" and the full meaning begins to dawn upon me. You know I cannot be one of those intrepid souls who challenge suffering. I have no confidence in my own strength, for I have no strength. I need courage, for mine constantly fails. I need faith, for mine is constantly assailed.

But God has not held these things against me. Instead He says: Come, I will give into your keeping one of my precious creations, a soul for whom I prepared heaven ages before ages, for whom I gave My Son upon the Cross. And to be your consolation I give you one who has suffered all that you need suffer, and more. The mother of mothers, *Mater Christi*.





Breast-feeding is again becoming the accepted thing in some circles. Since it is still far from being the usual way of baby feeding in America, we asked Mrs. Newland, the mother of six children, to discuss it in *INTEGRITY*.

## Mother or Cow?

**Mary Reed Newland:** Exactly why and when breast-feeding ceased to be the accepted manner of feeding infants I have not had the time to discover, but it must inevitably have begun to lose its vogue with the emancipation of women—that emancipation which freed them from so many of the obligations and privileges of wife and motherhood, which dragged them out of their kitchens and into their offices, out of their nurseries and around their bridge tables.

Whatever its beginnings, it is plain to see that as birth control became socially more acceptable, the natural (as contrasted with unnatural) and obedient use of the procreative powers and the resulting large families became socially less acceptable. There finally hovered about the reputations of fertile parents an aura of the animal-like—it apparently failing to occur that the deliberate failure to reproduce was no measure of continence, or contrarily

that the very cycles of baby-bearing impressed continence periodically upon the obedient and fertile. In a perverted way, deliberate sterility became synonymous with chastity, and fertility with a kind of carelessness or promiscuity in marital relations. Following its logical sequence, all the normal attitudes and practises appendant to the business of baby-bearing suffered the same perversion, and breast-feeding among other things ended up being socially repugnant.

### **how ridiculous**

Viewed from the vantage point of the Creator, bottle-feeding must look not only unnecessary but a little ridiculous. It is only beginning to occur to us how ridiculous. After moving along for thousands of years using the bodies God gave us to feed our infants with a food that is nature-made for them, that is impeccably clean, that is available at a moment's need, that is dispensed in the most psychologically happy manner, we thought for a brief half century or so to improve on God's way by inventing a glass bottle only vaguely resembling the human breast, equipping it with a rubber nipple which now dispenses, now does not, and filling the bottle with food that God intended for mother cows to feed to baby cows. Sounds silly, doesn't it?

Howsoever, here we are with more mothers bottle-feeding their babies than not, with many who honestly cannot breast-feed who are too nervous, too ill-nourished, or in whom the repugnance to breast-feeding has become so deeply ingrained that it is a psychological impossibility. And I do not intend to scoff at my formula-feeding sisters. Many would leave the ranks, I am sure, if they were given only a little encouragement. There is probably little that is deliberately malicious in the discouragement met on all sides by would-be nursing mothers, but whatever the reason, unenthusiastic doctors and nurses account for as many failures in the breast-feeding department as do nervous temperaments and difficult babies.

### **inevitable discouragement**

I was told flatly that I could not nurse my first baby, because he wasn't learning to nurse fast enough, was losing weight too fast, the quality of the milk was not up to par, he wasn't happy nursing, and he awoke frequently between feedings and cried in the hospital nursery so had to be fed a formula. It was all very convincing and like a good obedient girl I accepted the verdict. I wept copiously, wondered why after so many earnest prayers Jesus and Mary had not pulled the attempt off successfully for me, and I went home resigned to be a formula-feeding mother.

By the time the next baby was on the way we were very poor and that meant, among other things, that there wasn't going to be enough money to buy extra milk for the new baby. If only I could nurse. So once again we started to pray that in spite of the first failure the second time things would go better. Things did, and I think that probably along with the prayers it was the dire need and the determination that made the difference. Once again I was discouraged but this time, not quite so wide-eyed and glib, I insisted that both the baby and I be given a chance to work it out. It never did work out there in the hospital. But it finally worked out at home, and then it became quite clear that of course I could breast-feed, and could have done it with the first baby. The determinant in the failure had not been me or baby, but the unnatural four-hour schedule in the hospital, the impatience of the nurses who had little or no time to be wasted trying to fit the newborn's erratic feeding schedule to their own busy day, and the general attitude of tongue-in-cheek which greeted the announcement of a would-be nursing mother in their midst. I do not entirely condemn the discouraging doctors and nurses. They are as firmly enmeshed in the social system we have cast as the rest of the world, and as things stand now only a few hospitals are equipped to handle the procedure whereby mother and baby are kept side by side and baby may eat whenever he wishes. Until this is universally possible, mothers who want to breast-feed will continue to struggle against the artificial four-hour hospital schedule unsuccessfully, and the only thing to do is to hang on to your convictions until you get home. So much for discouragement at the hospital.

### **Embarrassing ?**

There are some mothers who resist breast-feeding because they are afraid it will not fit into the pattern of home and neighborhood life and will net them more embarrassment than satisfaction. I remember a young mother who gave this as her excuse for not breast-feeding. Her father-in-law lived with them and she was sure trying to nurse her baby would be more humiliating than anything else, with her menfolk forever walking in on it, embarrassing her and being embarrassed, and she herself completely retired socially until the baby could be weaned. She was finally coaxed, however, to agree to nurse her baby for the first two weeks, even though unconvinced that her feeling about nursing would change. It did not take two weeks for it to change, but two days—and after two days she smiled and said, "I see what you mean now. There's something about nursing a baby, isn't there?"



## continuing creation

There *is* something about nursing a baby—something that is communicated to the whole family—and it is something that is predominantly spiritual, for all the physical form it takes, because it is an extension of the act of creation. To make a baby take nine months of walking sacramentally, with every step dedicated nine months of mystery and miracle where a seed so tiny it cannot be seen by the naked eye can achieve form and shape and intelligence and soul. All this comes to be by the power of God but made from the substance of our own flesh, until at the end in an act so great that it has ramifications in eternity, a person is born another immortal.

But this is only the beginning, and the act of creating continues. The baby is not meant to be snipped free from his mother like a paper doll, suddenly to take up existence totally independent from her. He has been growing for nine months, he must continue to grow, and there is the continuance of creation in each new cell, each new eyelash, each new tear.

Animal babies, bird babies, insect babies, within a few hours or days of their birth are able to survive by themselves—but not human babies. More than any other creature the human baby is totally helpless and at his mother's mercy. And it would be utterly illogical if this dependence of the infant upon his mother were not provided for by God. First of all, and almost immediately, there is an increased awareness in the mother, a maternal instinct aroused to such delicate perception that one can almost sense when a baby is in need. I have read somewhere, and whether theory or isolated fact it is entirely reasonable, that with the coming of the mother's milk there is a glandular activity which accounts for this increase of awareness. Surely it sounds like the kind of thing God would do, Who is able and has performed such miracles of intricate manoeuvre in the body already. And observing first His great care to prepare the mother instinct, it follows that the further unfolding of the physiological aspects of His plan are equally to be marvelled at. He has created for the mother a body which not only bears this child but also feeds it, and the act of breastfeeding a child is an intimacy second only to the carrying of it.

So the tiny creature who lay tucked so snugly away in the darkness of the mother's body is now weaned a little away from her, but not too much or too fast from his warm retreat, his sweet closeness to his mother. His growing up will be daily, a step after a step away from her, but God is incredibly gentle, His timing is divinely perfect and the transition from the womb of the mother

to her arms, to feed at her breast, is designed in tenderness and divine mercy.

There is another marvel to be observed here. Before the mother's breast begins to manufacture milk, it produces a substance called colostrum which is an aid to flushing out the last residues from pre-natal life which remain within the baby. Does it not seem a senseless omission—failing to use what God has designed for the baby's best good?

### **The mother's needs**

The mother has many needs too, after the birth of her baby. First of all she needs rest, along with activity—a nice proportion of each in order to regain her strength, her stamina, her equilibrium. One plans to rest, but once home from the hospital there is so much to do, such chaos to right, that rest is bought too dearly and often foregone entirely. God is not whimsical, but He is wise, and knowing this side of woman well He has contrived a situation following birth in which the mother *must* rest. Anyone who has had a baby will agree that along with having a few good cries for herself, one of the things mothers invariably do is overestimate their strength. The swift rush of energy is soon drained and nothing looks so good as a chair to collapse in.

Now consider the pattern of the baby's hunger. It does not facsimilate the rigid four-hour schedule of the hospital. It is a pattern of crying, nursing, dozing, then crying, nursing, dozing, and it makes very good sense. The infant is tiny, he has never eaten this way before, in fact he has never known hunger before; he is weak and is incapable of sustaining for very long any energetic undertaking. Even the act of eating burns his meager energy and with just a little warm food in him, he will doze off—his way of resting and regaining his strength in order to awaken and cry again for food. Contrast the wisdom of an Almighty Father Who provides warm, sterile, especially appropriate food at whatever intervals baby demands it, together with a period of required rest for the mother who must sit or lie down in order to feed her baby, with the earnest but unnatural procedure that requires heating and reheating a bottle and a recurring battle with the inclination to prop the bottle and get in an extra few licks on the housework while baby is busy feeding. I have always thought it a little like the closed barn door with the horse out to hear admonitions about picking baby up and cuddling him when he has his bottle, in order to approximate the intimacy of breast-feeding. It makes so much better sense to breast-feed.

There is another physiological advantage to breast-feeding which benefits the mother, one that grows out of the sensitive relationship between nursing and the return of the uterus to its normal position and size. This part of the recuperation after childbirth varies with individuals, but roughly speaking it takes the full six weeks of the post-partum period before the uterus is returned to normal and the mother's internal anatomy is as it was before. The return to normal is much more rapid with breast-feeding mothers; once again we see a deliberate feature of the divine plan.

And wed to all these wonders still one more, the unerring instinct with which the baby—without being coaxed more than once or twice—knows why he is being held to his mother's breast, and weak as he is, knows how to suck. It could never be explained to him—but it need not be. He comes already knowing.

### **why the stigma?**

Perhaps it is here, at the moment when the baby actually begins to breast-feed, that the largest share of objection is registered by mothers, either frankly aloud, or secretly to themselves. There is a stigma attached to it, hard to explain. Somehow it doesn't seem quite what a gentlewoman would do—especially not in front of anyone. In fact with some people there is an open aversion to it as though it were animal-like. We dismiss these objections with one reminder: the Mother of God nursed *her* Baby, than whom there was no more gentle gentlewoman.

It may not be socially acceptable to nurse one's child in public, but when the same society which frowns on this accepts without a tremor the wholesale denuding of young women on the beach, on the dance floor, and in the entertainment world, it is silly even to look to society for a rule. Mothers do not ordinarily go about nursing their babies in public unless it is absolutely necessary, but when it is, it is usually under conditions which provide an inspired frame for what is obviously a very fundamental and womanly act. I remember several years ago (following, I believe, the devastation of the Ohio floods) seeing a photograph of a mother sitting on a pile of rubble, bereft of her home, her belongings, possibly even some of the members of her family, serenely nursing her baby. It was nationally acclaimed as the most beautiful news photograph of the year. And it was because she was performing her function as mother under conditions that demanded heroic fortitude that the shot had such great beauty.

### **a holy act**

The difference between mere nudity and the partially bared breast of a mother who nurses her baby is simple: the latter is



oly. Discretion calls for privacy if it is possible, but a sense of the holiness is communicated even when privacy is not possible and not only father and the children but sometimes even their friends wander in while the youngest member of the family is having his lunch. Children, and even neighbors if they happen to be in and out a lot, accept it quite simply for what it is—the feeding of a child the way God meant it to be fed. Familiarity with it is obviously what God wills for the family, and it is not the familiarity which breeds contempt, but rather a deeply rooted understanding of the whys and wherefores of feminine anatomy and design.

Not long ago a little boy wandered in where I was nursing our new baby, and after his initial start, gasped:

"What is he *doing*?"

"Why, he is having his lunch, Christopher. Have you never seen a baby fed by his mommy before?"

"No." And he pondered deeply a few minutes watching us. Finally he turned and made his way down the hall with these words, very distinct:

"So *that's* why mommies have bosoms."

Wouldn't it be fine if we could raise all our young to look at us and at our daughters and think of our design in terms of God's holy plan?

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### BOTTLE BABY

The swaying tipler chortles:

"I guess I'll have another,

I love the sight of bottles,

They remind me of my mother."

# Family Service

**Mary Anne Kimbell:** Joyful anticipation at the birth of a new child is often mingled with a certain apprehension today, as young families face all the forces lined up against the fulfillment of their primary function: the procreation and education of children. Sometimes it must seem as if society is deliberately throwing road blocks across the path of couples who have determined to live on principle and to receive as sons of God all the children that Heaven wills.

It is usually the third baby that does it. The third little one, especially if he arrives closely on the heels of brother and sister, is an unfashionable baby, and there will be no lack of hints and comments as to why he should not have been welcomed in the first place—or at least bided his time for a couple of years. The imminent arrival of a third child will precipitate a discouraging search for a larger house, or an unsatisfactory arrangement of facilities in the two-bedroom unit in which most young couples must begin married life. The third child means another serious revision of the budget to meet rising costs of living. And to crown the difficulties, his mother is having no luck solving a problem which has been looming larger and larger as the weeks have become shorter and shorter: where can she turn for someone who will mother the children and manage the household with concern and interest while she is away?

"How we mothers could use help when a new baby arrives," wrote a young wife recently in a national Catholic family magazine. "The arrival of the first baby is a wonderful thrill, and there is not much difficulty connected with that event. But we wonder and become uneasy about what is going to happen to the rest of the family when we have to drop out of the home picture temporarily, at the arrival of the second baby, or the third, and others after that."

## the family and the community

The isolated family, left to solve its own problems on its own resources is a sign of our individualistic age. In the past, the community has always aided the family in carrying out its functions. Young people starting out in marriage have almost always had a dowry, house and land, a whole background of skills and traditions, neighbors to lend a hand in time of illness or other crisis. But today the circumstances of an industrialized society

Practical assistance to mothers in aiding them with housework and care of children is a work worth the attention of women, particularly those who are unmarried or whose own children are grown. This can take the form of anything from occasional baby-sitting to a full-time vocation. Mary Anne Kimbell, head of the Gabriel House Family Service Center in Cincinnati and permanent staff member of Grailville, writes on the vocation to full-time family service.

and a shifting population often leave the family completely on its own, far from relatives and friends.

But the fundamental relationship of the family to the community has not changed, even though it has become inoperative. That this third youngster—or fourth or fifth or sixth—is being awaited by the Brown family down the block is a fact which transcends the immediate family circle and touches the whole community. This child is a future citizen of the town and nation, a future member of the parish of St. Aloysius where he will be born again in the womb of the baptismal font and intimately joined to his fellow members of the Mystical Body. Through these bonds, this youngster has claims on each member of the community and his advent is a community concern.

What does this mean practically? It means that the community must work that the birth of this child does not impose impossible burdens on the family. It means that the community must help turn the tide of popular opinion and practical difficulties which discourages young families from having children at all, must help to build up a social and moral climate in which families can grow out as healthy cells of the Mystical Body. The strength of the Church ultimately depends on the strength and vigor of the smallest units, the "little churches," the families.

But the isolated family cannot hope to wage an effective battle against all the complex forces at work. The fact that groups of families are working together in many communities is already a great step forward—the family apostolate is indeed one of the most hopeful signs of the Christian renewal. The other movements of our time working for social justice also contribute to the rebuilding of family life—for example, the labor movement, seeking a living wage for heads of families; the press, underscoring the problems of families and encouraging discussion of solutions. But the realization that many of the difficulties cannot be solved at all on a mass scale must draw many young men and women to seek a vocation where they can directly and personally work for the rebuilding of the family.



## the responsibility of the unmarried

That the unmarried man and woman have a direct responsibility to the family may be a new thought at first. But on second look it is not such a novel idea. In days past the older daughters as a matter of course shared the mother's burdens until time for their own marriages. Many families welcomed a maiden aunt or cousin who fulfilled the same function. Even the hired girl had a part in the community task of aiding the family. There is no need to point out that the maiden aunt and the hired girl suffered abuses under a system which limited their horizons to the home, though it is equally true that many gave devoted service which was not lightly valued and found a real fulfillment.

But even beyond the fact of custom, there is a kind of "providential relationship" between married and single people, which indicates that the young unmarried man and woman have a duty to the family. The young person emerges from a home where he has received life, care, education, love. Until he assumes his own family responsibilities, he has a freedom to act and to risk, a leisure for research and study denied to married people. Life is dynamic and the generations move forward—the only way that he can truly repay the debt he owes is to the next generation. Working hand in hand with families, the single person is in a particularly advantageous position to help the community arrive at Christian solutions to the problems families face.

The times, then, demand of young men and women personal vocations, often into new and pioneer fields. "A Christian," says Father de Montcheuil, "does not choose his temporal function, but asks himself what it is that God has planned for him. The aptitudes, the circumstances and the needs of others are so many indications which he must faithfully interpret in order to know his own true vocation." Working at the problems from ground up, rather than the social-welfare bureau down, these vocations will be built on the concept of a personal service to Christ in our neighbor. For instance, the young Notre Dame architect who is dedicating his life to designing homes for individual families in the lower-income bracket, the group of young men in the East who donate their Saturdays toward helping young families build their own homes, are examples of meeting the problems of the family in new and dynamic ways. If we are faithful in following the leads of the Holy Spirit, a new type of Christian community service will develop, which will roll up its sleeves and work for an organic, individual approach to the needs of families today.

## family service as a vocation

One new vocation which is growing out of the needs of the family in our time and being answered by the young women of the Christian community is the apostolate of Family Service. Direct aid to families in times of crisis—the birth of a new baby, or the illness of the mother—this new apostolic career is especially designed to serve the “forgotten family”—neither the very rich, who have adequate help, nor the family beset by emotional and social problems which is chronically in need of help and in the realm of the trained social worker.

But Family Service, it must be pointed out in the beginning, is not a case of one person doing all the giving, and another merely receiving. The Family Service worker herself is participating in a work which is uniquely fitted to develop her womanly qualities and prepare her as few other works could for her future task, either as a Christian wife and mother, or as a spiritual mother in the lay apostolate.

The family is a “natural sphere” for young women, and dealing with families, especially on a personal and direct basis, is a deeply satisfying work. Almost without exception, girls who have had a taste of Family Service readily admit that they could find it more interesting and rewarding than their experiences in an often sterile and meaningless office routine.

But one major difficulty always looms on the horizon whenever the vocation of Family Service is discussed. How can this work, which everyone agrees is so necessary and vital, be invested with a greater dignity and status?

There is no use in pretending that every last person the Family Service worker encounters is going to assure her loudly that she is doing a more worthwhile work than when she sat behind the receptionist's desk or sold lamps in Sears & Roebuck. But in the concrete situation, the difficulties on this score are more imaginary than real. For one thing, the fact that the young woman keeps her own identity by living at an official center, and knows that she is part of an apostolic team working to help build up Christian family life, helps her keep her goal and purpose in mind. Families themselves seem to understand readily the vision behind Family Service and the motives of those engaged in it. In Holland, where over a thousand Family Service workers have been trained by the Grail since the end of the war, the work is rapidly gaining recognition as a sister-vocation to nursing and social work, and there is every indication that the same thing will happen in this country as the work becomes more widely known. One day...

to read accounts of how the first young women who determined to nurse the sick as a profession were greeted with cries of "De-grading!" to know that attitudes change rapidly.

But ultimately Family Service will become a work with real status in direct proportion to the way we regard the vocation of marriage itself. As we grow in the conviction that the woman who marries has not chosen a second-rate career, but one which demands her greatest talents and capacities, then Family Service will become increasingly honored as an aid to the fulfillment of a vital and important vocation. As the family apostolate grows, more and more young women will see the role of wife and mother as a tremendously important one; they will be receptive to working with families not only as a worthy profession and apostolate, but also because they will see clearly that their own future success in such an important work can be assured through serving families as a preparation.

Nor must this renewed respect for marriage and the family stop at a sentimental regard for mother "in the abstract," an attitude which affects everyone on the second Sunday of May. There must be a healthy appreciation for the work of the home and the skills and talents demanded of the woman who adequately fulfills her task. In Chesterton's phrase, it cannot be a little thing to be "everything to someone." To be a wife, co-worker, adviser and helpmate; poet, teacher, child psychologist and recreation leader; cook, baker, nutritionist and interior decorator all at once, and possibly good in each field is no mean achievement. No one would deny that the average home also involves hours of unglamorous disagreeable work which only love can transform. But that is only a small part of the picture, in the overall contribution of woman as the heart and center of the home. When we estimate her contribution at its real value, then Family Service, too, will be seen as a vocation of worth and dignity.

### **family service in action**

Ever since its beginning days in Loveland, Ohio, in 1944, Grailville had been involved in Family Service, sending out students to assist families all over the country. But the need for this work, and the importance of developing all the potentialities of a new womanly career were so evident that it seemed clear a step should be made toward setting up Family Service on an organized basis, and training a group of young women to devote their full time to it.

Three years ago a young social worker who had become a permanent staff member of the Grail came to Cincinnati and took

job in social service work, in order to study the situation and lay the groundwork for a permanent center. In September of 1951, with two more young women from Grailville, "Gabriel House" began life in a three-room apartment with a telephone, a wobbly table, and an ancient refrigerator and stove as its main assets. Word of the service spread rapidly, and the team was soon booked weeks in advance. The center has never had to do one jot of advertising, which points up the very real need for such a service. Even though Gabriel House's phone has never been listed—the first year it was under the apartment owner's name, this year it was left out of the book by mistake—one family told another, and 320 requests which qualified for the service have been recorded over a 21-month period. A move to the present Gabriel House, a solid, spacious old family residence, and adding to the staff of Family Service workers has enabled the center to fill 135 of these requests to date. An average of two weeks has been spent in each family.

Although the work at Gabriel House is still in its beginning stages, the experience there already indicates some of the basic ingredients necessary in the operation of a Family Service program—both from the point of view of the families, and the welfare and spiritual growth of the young women.

The primary consideration is the Family Service worker herself—her training and orientation. To serve families successfully, and to grow through her work, it is essential that the young women have an understanding of the lay apostolate and the Christian ideal of service. While Family Service is an interesting and varied work, with many tangible rewards and satisfactions, the fact remains that it is a vocation which asks a daily and total gift of self in a hundred different ways: a ready adaptability to each changing family situation, an intuition which senses just how much authority and initiative the mother wishes her to take over, and what the mother wishes to reserve to herself, a willingness to preserve the mother's way of doing things in preference to her own, a tact which recognizes which family situations she must deal with and which she should ignore. Family Service requires pitching into all sorts of household tasks, some of which involve plain hard work and effort, without reference to one's own likes and dislikes. Moreover, in the very nature of its aims—to serve families regardless of how much or how little they can pay, Family Service cannot offer the monetary rewards which women can command today in other fields. But above all, the Christian ideal of service demands that the family must never be made to feel that it



is the object of an unusual charity. Services must be rendered with a certain matter-of-factness and sense of proportion, growing out of the young woman's conviction that she is doing more than fulfilling a normal community obligation. Only a Family Service worker who sees her work as an apostolate, and as a dedication to Christ, present in the family circle and the object of all the service rendered, can achieve these things.

Secondly, the young women who do Family Service must have a vision and deep appreciation of the role of the family in society. This will help them to see their job as an important work, a participation in the task of social reconstruction. But in addition, with womanly wisdom and tact, the Family Service worker must be prepared to translate something of this vision into the lives of the individual families she serves. In some of the Christian homes of today she will learn far more than she can give. But in others, where the ideas of the apostolate are new, she will find families eager and interested to learn about means for leading fuller Christian lives. Her position will afford her a natural opportunity to co-operate with the family in introducing practices and customs in an informal and spontaneous manner. Family Service workers have been able to encourage such things as family prayer and home-centered recreation, a renewed interest in the Mass and the promotion of "Mass preparation," both in the family circle and in the community, a deeper understanding of the sacramental life of the Church through surrounding the Baptism and Confirmation days of the children with appropriate family festivities; the blessings of the mother before and after childbirth; the use of the Advent wreath and the blessings of the Christmas tree and crib.

### **practical considerations**

And finally, Family Service demands a basic knowledge of the home arts and an ease and "at homeness" with children. Length of training for workers depends on the individual girl's home background, as well as her spiritual maturity. Her actual work in families broadens and deepens the concepts she receives in training, and her intellectual and practical formation continues through participation in the program of the Family Service Center.

A residence in common is another essential ingredient in the sound organization of a Family Service Program. Woman is made to live in a family pattern; she needs the inspiration and discipline of communal living. If Family Service is to be an apostolate in the highest sense and if the workers are to fulfill the responsibility of their vocation, the young women must share their apostolate

is a total way of life. Besides the opportunity for continued growth in the ideas and skills of the work, the fostering of an *esprit de corps*, living together enables the Family Service workers to participate in a pattern of Christian family living of their own—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each morning, common prayer, sharing in work and study and recreation.

The question of financing a program of Family Service is another important point to consider. Even though Family Service workers see their service as an apostolate, the work should rest on a sound financial basis so that it earns its own way, and in addition, does not bar girls with financial responsibilities. As in all pioneer enterprises, the first months at Gabriel House presented some rocky financial problems. But by charging the families on a sliding scale, and pooling the earnings, the center has so far made its own way, and the workers have received from the common fund enough to cover personal needs. Ordinarily, financial arrangements with the family are made in advance by the leader, and the worker herself does not know what each family pays; she gives equal service to the different families, irrespective of the amount they are able to contribute.

### **Christian community service center**

Many other community services are growing out of the work at Gabriel House, and show the potentialities of such a center. The team has maintained contact with the mothers served, and has arranged meetings and social activities to bring together these women—and sometimes their whole families—to continue their study of Christian family life and to work for the development of the family apostolate. Often the first interest in the apostolate has been sparked in the family by the Family Service worker. The team has also co-operated with the programs of various organizations dedicated to the restoration of the family: local courses on family life, the Xavier University Family Life Conference, the Catholic Industrial Relations Council. This summer the center is offering courses in nutrition, child care and recreation in the home for young women interested in the family. Speakers from the team have been invited to colleges, high schools and parishes to discuss the lay apostolate and their own work.

Aside from such community service directly connected with the family, a Family Service Center is also a natural starting point for wider apostolic activity. Gabriel House has served to introduce many young women from the area to the basic ideas of the lay apostolate—a Lenten course for working girls in the form of introductory meetings on the lay apostolate, a six-week program

on "The world embracing outlook of the Christian" for high school girls, weekly art workshops, feastday celebrations shared with working and college girls, professional women and foreign students, a Mass-preparation group, are just a few of the general apostolic activities which Gabriel House has sponsored.

### **family service, a training for life**

The satisfaction a young woman so naturally finds in Family Service work points to its intrinsic value—the opportunity to deal personally with people, to nourish and mother, to serve in a spirit of self-sacrifice and dedication, forms the young women as few other occupations could. All Family Service workers are unanimous in agreeing that their experience has taught them endless lessons in humility, considerateness, reverence for others, trust in God.

For the young woman who will marry, Family Service has value in being one of the best possible ways to develop the insight and qualities necessary to be a mother. She comes to know children intimately. "Many young women who come from small families do not have the necessary experience in dealing with children in a normal family atmosphere," one young mother who did Family Service before marriage points out. "Family Service, both in the training and the actual work, gave me a great and valuable insight into this crucial part of a mother's task."

Not only will she learn from working with the children; she will also learn from the mother. One young woman was amazed and delighted to find that "every mother of a large family seems to have a store of wisdom—and the only way to share in her treasure is to be with her in her home, with its everyday joys and sorrows, ups and downs, in which a person's real spirit expresses itself."

The need for Family Service has been widely recognized, and a workable solution has been found. But many more young women must come forward to share this venture, to give a few years or a lifetime to building this new apostolate. Particularly needed are girls with a background in sociology, who can set up programs in various sections of the country. The only factor holding back the founding of other Grail Family Service Centers is the lack of capable, apostolic pioneers to organize units in various communities which have requested them.

May many young women set out in the footsteps of Our Lady of the Visitation, who did not hesitate or count the cost of her service when she learned that Elizabeth awaited a child and needed her.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### Maritain from Another Point of View

#### CREATIVE INTUITION IN ART AND POETRY

By Jacques Maritain  
Pantheon, \$6.50

"Creative intuition is the only supreme gift that a poet, in any art whatsoever, ought to seek—in the way in which a gift can be sought: not in the

sense that it might be acquired by any effort of the human will, but in the sense that it can be cared for, and protected, and assisted, when it is there. And it is there, perhaps in a humbler way than he believes, in any man who is inclined toward the workings of art by an inner necessity. Sometimes, and in the greatest artists, creative intuition may be at work in darkness and agony. Then they may think of what Pascal felt about another kind of grace, and this holds true for them also: 'Take comfort, thou wouldst not be seeking me, hadst thou not found me.'"

The many and various points of creative intuition in art and poetry discussed and made clear in this extraordinary book are the lifelong reflection, given in a startling and enchanting way, of a noted and great philosopher. Maritain makes clear both the distinction and the indissoluble relationship between art and poetry. Another main purpose he insists on is the part played by the intellect in both art and poetry, and especially the fact that poetry has its source in the preconceptual life of the intellect. He shows the evolution of the process of internalization through which human consciousness has passed from the concept of the person to the experience of subjectivity and how it reaches the creative art itself.

"The inner meaning of things are enigmatically grasped through the artist's Self, and both are manifested in the work together. The object henceforth is uniquely the work. Poetry became conscious of itself and painting is concerned with painting."

Piero della Francesca and Bosch are forerunners of the full liberation of the poetic sense in painting. The great witness of it remains Cézanne. "He recast and transfigured natural appearances according to his intuitive knowledge. He imposed his style on nature all the more forcefully as he was not concerned with inventing a style, but with discovering in nature, in that world of thick, voluminous matter permeated with light and color that is the very world of the painter, a working secret as singular as his own Self."

Maritain mentions Rouault, Chagall, Van Gogh, Seurat, Matisse, Renoir—all the great and less resounding names of modern painting and says this about their work: "What makes modern painting (I am not speaking of abstract art) singularly dear to us, is the fact that its means are incomparably appropriate for the liberation of the poetic sense. Thus it is that the least bit of modern painting when it is simply good, awakens in us deeper emotion and resonance and delight, and love, than many masterpieces of the past."

But about the surrealists he says that in one respect they were prophets of the modern world, "namely with regard to the repudiation of beauty. But they dismissed beauty for the sake of magical knowledge, whereas the modern world, with infinitely greater success, dismisses beauty for the sake of nothing except hard labor. The dismissal of beauty is



quite a dangerous thing—if not for art, which *cannot* in reality divorce beauty, at least for humanity.”

“Modern abstract art implies in no way a repudiation of beauty. But turning away from the difficult task of expressing the transparent aspect of things, it has become a way to escape poetic intuition, and has become a kind of academicism.” It makes it easy to paint, it spares people the self-abnegation and the ordeals imposed by poetic creativity.

This book is not only concerned with painting, but fundamentally with poetry—which is, as Maritain says, “The free creativity of the spirit, and the intuitive knowledge through emotion, which transcend and permeate all arts, in as much as they tend toward beauty, as an end beyond the end.”

The book is illustrated both with reproductions of paintings and with literary illustrations in the form of texts without comment which appear at the end of each chapter. These are a set of significant images, not for the eye, but for the mind.

FRANK NIGRA

## BOOK NOTES

Catholic vacationists will appreciate *God along the Highway* (published by *Extension*, \$1.00). It contains a list of churches and gives the time of Sunday Mass. It is the spiritual counterpart of Duncan Hines' books for travelers. The only drawback being with all such books that the towns and resorts listed are never in the vicinity of where you're vacationing (and vice versa).

*Two Worlds for Memory* by Alfred Noyes (Lippincott, \$5.00) is a pleasant autobiography by a poet who has always felt that artists and scientists should be friends, and whose main work has been achieved in an attempt to show the unity of all truth—poetic, scientific and philosophic—and its harmony with revelation. This book tells only indirectly of his conversion to Catholicism and is concerned chiefly with literary anecdotes. This is not meant as an adverse criticism; indeed it makes delightful, relaxing summer reading—especially for anyone who loves Noyes' poetry, of which he quotes quite a bit.

*The Surprise* is a play by G. K. Chesterton (Sheed and Ward, \$1.50) that somehow or other eluded publication up until now. And that is a shame because it is extremely worthwhile. There is a preface by Dorothy L. Sayers, but we warn you that you should read the play first before you look at the preface. It's much more fun that way—not that Miss Sayers' words are not interesting, but she explains the moral and it is much more stimulating to figure it out for yourself. Like most of Chesterton's writings, this play brief as it is starts one thinking all sorts of thoughts, and even succeeds in awakening long-unused intellects.

*The Words of St. Francis* by James Meyer, O.F.M. (\$3.00), *The Friends of St. Francis* by Sidney F. Wicks (\$2.50) and *The Hour of St. Francis of Assisi* by Reinhold Schneider (\$1.75) will appeal to the Poverello's fans. They are all published by the Franciscan Herald Press. Schneider's book, translated from the German, gives a rather different interpretation of the life and work of this most lovable saint. Also published recently is a new edition of *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi* by Dom Roger Hudleston, O.S.B. (Newman, \$3.50).

# LORCH

is a monthly magazine published by the Dominican Fathers who believe that the wisdom of St. Thomas should not be concealed from the modern world, and that the zeal of St. Dominic should be revealed in daily action. Edited primarily for tertiaries, though of interest to every Christian layman who takes his religion seriously and who believes like St. Catherine of Siena (a tertiary) that in charity to our neighbor we prove our love for God. For articles that will help you to learn wisdom and to exercise an enlightened zeal—read the Lorch.

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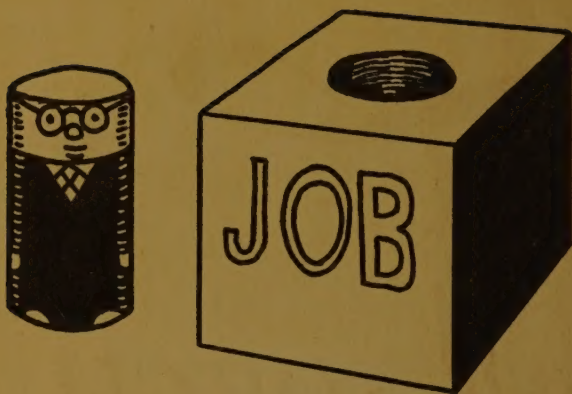
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